

Midway's Swiss Heritage Traced

8-29-01

My Swiss heritage is something I have always been aware of, especially since every Thanksgiving dinner of my childhood included sauerkraut.

It wasn't until I was older and attended a Thanksgiving dinner with relatives on my father's side of the family that I discovered not everyone includes sauerkraut on their

arriving one of Lynn's favorite quotes became, "I was raised in Midway and have no Swiss blood in me, but my children do."

Back then we lived in Salt Lake and everyone who discovered he was from Midway would comment about Swiss Days. I think he liked to confuse people with this little bit of information.

When "A History of Wasatch County" was printed for the Centennial Statehood celebration of Utah in 1996, I purchased a copy and read it. I was surprised that few of the original settlers of

Midway were actually Swiss. The Swiss families who were here when the Midway Fort was built include the Abegglen, Abplanalp, Buhler, Burgener, Galli, Huber, Schneitter, Schoney and Sulzers. Nine of 75 families were Swiss.

Where did the Swiss emphasis of Midway's heritage come from? The answer lies partly in missionary work.

In 1871 Brigham Young, president and prophet for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, sent John Huber back to his native Switzerland on a mission. As a result of his missionary efforts, many Swiss came to Midway between 1870 and 1872.

Over the next three and a

half decades, 15 of the 18 missionaries called from Midway served in Switzerland. Missionaries in the late 1800's encouraged new converts to immigrate to Utah and Swiss immigration to Midway increased after each mission served.

By 1880, 27 percent of Midway's population, adults and children, were of Swiss descent.

The Swiss were, for the most part, well accepted in Utah and Midway. Many of the Swiss and their descendants became prominent leaders in the city. This helped to contribute to local emphasis of Midway's Swiss heritage.

Some of Midway's prominent families who came to Midway later, and are still prominent in the valley today. They are the Besendorfer, Gertsch, Haueter, Huffaker,

Burkhardt family had lived here for a time.

My family story goes that a great-great grandfather loved it here, but when the Salt Lake Temple was completed he moved to Salt Lake to be near it.

While the Swiss in Midway were never the majority and never outnumbered those from the British Isles, there were far more Swiss in Midway than any other settlements in Wasatch County.

I think it's great that we live in a community that can celebrate something unique—we have the largest population of Swiss descendants in the Heber Valley. The celebration attracts many who are of Swiss descent from around the area.

I also think it's great that I met and married a Swiss-less Midway man so our children can feel proud of the full

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holiday menu.

Yes, the dinner plates were heaped with the traditional turkey, cranberry, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, green beans, and sweet potatoes. But the dinner didn't seem complete without sauerkraut.

Marrying a man raised in Midway was not on the top of my list when I went in search for the perfect spouse, but that's what I got. I consider it a bonus that came with the rest of the package. Although he doesn't have a drop of Swiss blood in him, I love him anyway.

You might wonder how that could be, especially if you knew that all of his pioneer ancestors settled in Midway.

When our children started

Kohler, Probst and Remund families.

It was during this time that my Swiss ancestors accepted the gospel and moved to Midway, something I was not fully aware of until Jerry Springer, local historian, confirmed that a

Midway heritage: British, Scandinavian and Swiss.

Historical information and statistics for this article were taken from "A History of Wasatch County", Jessie L. Embry, c. 1996 and "How Beautiful Upon the Mountains", Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, c. 1963.



There were many interesting Pioneer houses to see but of special interest to us was the Heber East Ward School House, which was the third school built in Heber. We sat at school desks and the "Teacher" gave us a lesson in how children were expected to behave in those days. No cell phones for sure! A Pioneer Buffet lunch at the Huntsman Hotel in the Village was enjoyed by all and we returned to Heber with lots of good memories to share with family and friends." By Mary Patterson

Tuesday, Aug. 21, thirty of us were amazed as Ellie Gobrecht showed slides and told of her 10 year adventure sailing in a 30 foot sailboat around the South Pacific with her friend. She told of a scary Pirate confrontation and of her hidden gun that the authorities searched the boat for. There were pictures of beautiful people who they befriended and of the cultures and foods that were so different from ours.

One unforgettable picture showed a member of a village who had a long "tie" of wooden bars that ran down his front. He was considered a "rich" man because as he accumulated things, he gave them away to others. Each time he gave away his belongings, he received another bar to show how rich he was. It sounds like an idea with merit to me! Thank you Ellie for an exciting and inspiring presentation. Our Seafood Casserole was delicious (the recipe, it will be available as a hand-out at the Center)

Well, it was a busy week as Friday, Aug. 24, we met again and thirty of us listened as Gordon and Carolyn Owen from Midway, held us spellbound

And this fascinating program. The books Gordon recommended will be listed in the Senior's Bulletin. Thank you Owens for opening our eyes and hearts to South Africa.

Carolyn provided a recipe which Bob, our chef, prepared for the luncheon. "Bobotie" was a delicious blend of ground beef with spices and golden raisins. Everyone loved it! This recipe also available at the Center. During lunch, two Reel movie tickets were won by Gladys Farrer. Hurrah!

September Calendar

Some of the events that are presently scheduled for September, with more to come:

Sept. 7: Free Breakfast for Seniors at the Center 8-10 a.m.

Sept. 10: Monday Night Fireside - Swiss Chorus singing 7 p.m.

Sept. 11: Glass Etching tree ornaments and mirrors. 10:30 a.m.

Sept. 12: Shopping trip to Provo

Sept. 18: Book Club - 10:30 a.m.

Sept. 20: Monthly Senior's Dinner 12 noon

Sept. 24: Monday Night Fireside - Pat Olsen of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, 7 p.m.

Sept. 28: Armchair Travel to Ethiopia with authentic meal by Ethiopian chef

Fun & Games will be available every Tuesday at 1 p.m. Come join the fun!

*Coming on Oct. 23, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" at the Hale Theater in Orem. Mark your calendar if you haven't seen this fabulous, funny and musical show. (And if you have seen it, you'll probably want to see it again—it's so good) Sign-ups will start in September.

Remember, you can dine with friends at the Center on Monday through Friday, for only \$2. each. Bring a friend and join others for a lovely, social feast. Following is this week's menu:

Thursday, Aug. 30: Barbecue ribs, fresh potatoes, corn, apple-sauce, carrot-raisin salad, roll and butter, oatmeal cake and milk.

Friday, Aug. 31: Fish, wild seasoned rice, pineapple, creamed peas and potatoes, roll and butter, fluff desert and milk.

Monday, Sept. 3: CENTER CLOSED and NO MEATS ON WHEELS.

Tuesday, Sept. 4: Sliced turkey

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Library Corner

Notes From

New Books

New books at the library this week include: "Year of Wonder" by Geraldine Brooks; "The Wire Done Gone" by Alice Randall; "Hostage" by Robert Crais; "The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint" by Brady Udall; "Trial by Ice" by Richard Parry and "The War Forward is with a Broken Heart" by Alice Walker.

Thank You

Thank you to all the sponsors who supported this year's Summer Reading Program and thanks to our great coordinator Mignon Probst and Susan Fassold. "Reading Road Trip" was a huge success.

Friends of the Library

Friends of the Library is a volunteer organization established to promote the Wasatch County Library. Its purpose is to raise funds for library materials, coordinate library volunteers and seek ways to help enhance the

Adopt a Pet

